# Table of Contents

## The Life and Times of Appropriations Committee Staff

- Appropriations Subcommittees with Health Focus **3**
- Appropriations Process **4**
- Responsibilities of Appropriations Committee Staff **5**
- Tips and Tricks for Effective Engagement **6**
- Inputs Considered by Appropriations Committee Staff **7**
- Committee Staff Outputs **8**
- Appropriations Process Cheat Sheet **9**
Appropriations Subcommittees with Health Focus

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATE

– Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies (FDA)
– Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
– Defense*
– Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies
– Financial Services and General Government
– Homeland Security
– Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (I-H-S)
– Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (most of HHS)
– Legislative Branch
– Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies*
– State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
– Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

*Note: the Veterans Health Administration is financed through MilCon/VA and the Military Health System is financed through Defense.
### Appropriations Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriation Bills</th>
<th>Twelve appropriations bills are prepared for adoption each year and go through the same congressional review process</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee Process</td>
<td>Appropriations subcommittees first recommend appropriations for each agency in their purview (Subcommittee Mark-Ups of the Chair’s Mark), followed by the full appropriations committee (Full Committee Mark-Ups) appropriations bills are prepared for adoption each year and go through the same congressional review process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Full House and Senate | Once the appropriations committee completes review of each subcommittee bill, the committee reports the bill with recommended changes to the full House and Senate for action  
Processes in the House and Senate are not necessarily sequential since both the House and Senate can consider their respective bills concurrently |
| Conference          | Occurs when two houses have disagreements within an appropriations bill; meeting is conducted to resolve the issues  
Conference committee report is returned to each house for a vote  
When both houses agree: presented to the President as an enrolled bill |
| President           | President either approves or vetoes the entire enrolled bill |
Responsibilities of Appropriations Committee Staff

**Typical Day**

- Committee staff are assigned a number of programs/accounts within their subcommittee and often carry out portfolio assignment duties, such as keeping track of pending authorizing legislation, changes in agency or field priorities and policies, and future direction.

- Track any and all budgetary changes made to the accounts in the subcommittee’s jurisdiction, including the President’s budget request and any budget amendments proposed, agency transfers and reprogrammings, planning scenarios, amendments adopted through the appropriations process.

- Regularly meet with internal and external stakeholders related to their portfolio, including lobbyists and interest groups.

- Staffers also:
  - Prepare questions for the record, opening statements, and background materials for the Chair, subcommittee members, and staff for all subcommittee hearings and prepare hearing volumes;
  - Conduct analyses on impact of budgetary and policy changes to the programs, projects, and activities in their portfolio;
  - Draft talking points to defend the Chair’s mark against amendment in subcommittee, full committee and the House floor;
  - Prepare conference notes and negotiate changes to appropriations bills with the other body; and
  - Regularly meet with the committee Chair, subcommittee members and their staff, as well as the Clerk and full-time staff.
## Tips and Tricks for Effective Engagement

**Understanding and evaluation enable effective interactions with Committee staff**

The task of developing impactful appropriations language requires an understanding of the steps involved in developing appropriations law, stakeholders in the process, and their tactics in shaping the law’s components.

### Analyzing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Know the Steps</th>
<th>Understand Changes</th>
<th>Analyze Documents</th>
<th>Evaluate Tactics</th>
<th>Develop Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being familiar with the legislative history and process allows for a deeper understanding of the meaning behind appropriations language</td>
<td>Identifying the changes to a bill as it progresses through the enactment process can provide understanding, which in turn enables effective analysis</td>
<td>Analyzing the documents and artifacts the Committee uses to explain legislative intent and the relative “weight” each document carries in explanatory value enables accurate evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluating stakeholders and the tactics they use to implement priorities illuminates intent and allows for the development of relevant and effective appropriations language</td>
<td>Understanding and evaluating the circumstances, processes, and intent of stakeholders enables the accomplishment of crucial objectives through targeted language development</td>
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6
Inputs Considered by Appropriations Committee Staff

Each step and contributing artifact in appropriations language development offers interpretations and guidance that shed light into Appropriations Committee staff day-to-day.

Knowing the current step in development also aids in crafting bill or report language or providing rationale for inclusion.

*Does not always occur each year for non-Defense programs
†Does not always occur for each agency or program each year
# Committee Staff Outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Main Outputs</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Staffer’s Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Financial Table | Every subcommittee has an extensive financial table (often run through Microsoft Excel or a similar application) to track the overall appropriations bill and every program within the subcommittee’s oversight. | • Review current appropriations bill and reference the President’s Budget request to identify budget authority, track outlays, and determine allocations (302b) to be entered into financial table.  
• The tracking tool identifies the costs of the subcommittee’s program requirements, which are then publicly reported.  
• Staffers are responsible for conducting side-by-side analysis in the financial table as changes are made to the appropriations bill. |
| 2. Appropriations Bill | A legislative bill that authorizes the government to obligate funds, (i.e., money is set aside for specific spending). The bill must become law in order for the government to appropriate funds. | • Review appropriation baseline, new program requirements, and resource requirements of proposed legislative proposals. Contribute to sections of bill which fall in staffer’s portfolio.  
• Provide edits based on the priorities of Congress based on program analysis and stakeholder input.  
• Work with other body committee staff to finalize bill language and appropriation amounts during conference negotiations. |
| 3. Committee Report/Statement of Managers | An accompanying report created by the subcommittee members that provides explanatory statements and budgetary justifications for the intent of the appropriations bill. | • Clearly articulate Congressional intent and justifications for budgetary and policy decisions in the bill  
• Staffers are on the floor when house is debating the committee version of the bill and track amendments, write floor statements and talking points for the Chair to defend the Committee bill, and negotiate points of order with legislative council to reach final bill agreement. |
Appropriations Process Cheat Sheet

**Budget Resolution Process**
- **HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE**
  - Hearings, Committee Mark-Up, House-Passed Budget Resolution
- **SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE**
  - Hearings, Committee Mark-Up, Senate-Passed Budget Resolution

**Joint Budget Resolution**
- Discretionary Spending Caps = 302(a) Allocations

**Appropriations Process**
- **HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**
  - 302(b) Allocations
  - 12 Subcommittees
  - Hearings
  - Subcommittee Mark-Ups
  - Full Committee Mark-Ups
  - House Floor
- **SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**
  - 302(b) Allocations
  - 12 Subcommittees
  - Hearings
  - Subcommittee Mark-Ups
  - Full Committee Mark-Ups
  - Senate Floor

**Appropriations Conference**
- House and Senate Both Pass Appropriations Conference Report

**Enrolled Bill Sent to President for Signature**

*Spending caps determine the amount of funding available for appropriations*